

Taylor-Hunnicuttt House
405 West 12th Street
Austin
Travis County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3268

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
TAYLOR-HUNNICUTT HOUSE

HABS NO. TX-3268

Location: 405 West 12th Street, between San Antonio and Guadalupe Streets, Austin, Travis County, Texas.

USGS Austin East Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 14.620740.3349690

Moved from a site 90' to the south, where it fronted on Guadalupe Street, in 1925.

Present Owner: Central Christian Church, 1110 Guadalupe, Austin, Texas 78701

Present Occupant: Tenants

Present Use: Apartments

Significance: The Taylor-Hunnicut House was built in 1872 by Dr. Matthew A. Taylor, a leading Austin physician, businessman, and investor. Dr. Taylor's widow married Hicklin P. Hunnicutt and the house remained in the family until the spring 1973 when it was purchased by the Central Christian Church. Originally facing Guadalupe Street, the prominent Victorian residence was moved to an adjoining lot fronting 12th Street in 1925, when the church acquired the corner lot.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1872 (dated cornerstone).
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which the structure stands. Reference is to the Clerk's Office of the County of Travis, Texas.

1858 Deed April 10, 1858, recorded April 13, 1858, Volume M, pp. 222-223.
Samuel Wright
To
M.A. Taylor
lots 5 and 6

- 1868 Deed November 16, 1868, recorded December 8, 1868, Volume R, page 488.
Wright S. Andrews, of city and county of Galveston
To
M.A. Taylor
lot 7
- 1900 Deed April 13, 1900, recorded May 7, 1900, in Volume 163, page 287.
Matthew A. Taylor
To
Wife, Bertha M.
Lots 5, 6, and 7 "known as the M.A. Taylor residence."
- 1924 Deed July 12, 1924, recorded November 18, 1924, Volume 366, pages 336-338.
Bertha M. Hunnicutt and husband, Hicklin P.
To
The Christian Church of Austin
Lot 5 and east 56 feet of lot 6.
- 1943 Will written November 19, 1935, filed January 25, 1943.
Bertha M. Hunnicutt
To
Husband, H.P., and daughter, Helen Mar.
Homestead on lot 7 and west 13 feet of lot 6.
- 1953 Will written January 5, 1944, filed May 4, 1953.
H.P. Hunnicutt
To
Adopted daughter, Helen Mar.

With the death of Helen Mar Hunnicutt in 1954 the property was divided among many heirs, who have gradually sold their shares to the Christian Church, now the Central Christian Church, of Austin. The last share was sold in the spring of 1973.

5. Original plans and construction: When first built, the Taylor-Hunnicutt house fronted Guadalupe Street on property consisting of lots 5, 6, and 7 in block 133 at the corner of Guadalupe and 12th Streets. Early photographs and city views show that the residence originally had a covered porch only on the first floor, and a balcony on the upper level. The hipped roof was very prominent, with round-arched dormer windows, a balustrade enclosing a deck, and tall molded chimneys. The rear two-story wing appeared to have a covered porch on the east side.

Although no early interior floor plans have been located, it seems apparent that both first and second floors consisted of a central hall flanked by two rooms on each side. The wing contained two rooms on each floor. The only descriptive reference to the interior found was in the Daily Democratic Statesman on July 10, 1878, which reported the July 9 wedding of Taylor's eldest daughter: presents were displayed "on the piano in one of the large parlors" and refreshments were "spread in the long, elegant dining room."

6. Alterations and additions: A photograph taken prior to the moving of the Taylor-Hunnicut House in 1925 shows a covered porch across the front of the second story. The details of the second floor porch suggest that it was added in the late nineteenth century. At some time, a patterned metal roof was put on the house and the large central front dormer was extended and screened to create a porch on the third floor. At several undetermined periods, the back porch was enclosed and various clapboard additions built onto the L-wing.

The interior floor plan remains basically as built, although some removable changes have occurred as the structure has been converted to accommodate numerous apartments.

In 1924, Mr. and Mrs. H.P. Hunnicutt sold the corner lot on which the house was located to the Central Christian Church. According to the Austin American Statesman on June 21, 1925, Mrs. Hunnicutt believed "the house was too splendidly constructed to tear it down." From its original position fronting Guadalupe Street, it was moved 90 feet, turned quarter-circle, and placed fronting 12th Street on a new foundation. During the period from April 15 to mid-June, 1925, when the move was completed, the family lived continuously in the house and experienced only the occasional inconvenience of having the gas cut off. The move, which cost \$10,500, was directed by Galveston mover, John Egert.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Dr. Matthew A. Taylor, the original owner of the Taylor-Hunnicut House, was a leading citizen in Austin throughout the last half of the nineteenth century. Graduating from Starling Medical College in 1847, Taylor arrived in Austin in the early 1850s. In addition to his own practice, he was active in the State Medical Association, a trustee of the State Lunatic Asylum, a member of the Board of Health in Austin, and was instrumental in the establishment of a new hospital in 1883. Dr. Taylor also contributed to other civic areas. He served as city alderman as well as a member of the Board of Administrators of the University of Texas, and was a moving spirit in the construction of a Presbyterian church in Austin. As an active Unionist at the time of the Civil War, he formed and contributed generously to a commission for the relief of soldiers' families. Dr. Taylor was also a financier investing heavily in property in the Austin vicinity and in ranch lands.

B. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views:

Bird's Eye View of the City of Austin, Travis County, Texas
1873. Drawn by Augustus Koch.

Austin, State Capitol of Texas. Drawn by Augustus Koch, 1887.

Three photographs showing this house are included with the data on the John H. Houghton House, HABS No. TX-3264. Photos

TX-3264-9 and a detail, TX-3264-10, were taken by Charles B. Wheelock ca. 1890. Photo TX-3264-12 also shows this house; photographer and date unknown. Photos from the Austin Public Library.

2. Primary and unpublished sources:

Newspaper File, Austin newspapers, Austin-Travis County Collection, Austin Public Library

Travis County Deed Books, Travis County Courthouse, Austin Texas

3. Secondary and published sources:

Coleman, James M. Aesculapius on the Colorado: The Story of Medical Practice in Travis County to 1899. Austin: The Encino Press, 1971.

Prepared by: Ellen Beasley
Project Historian
National Park Service
August 1973

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Originally built in 1872 on Guadalupe Street west of the Capitol grounds, this house was one of the earliest of the five large mansions of that area. The walls of hand-dressed ashlar stone work with cut stone quoins and window trim give it a distinctive character.
2. Condition of the fabric: Although moved from another site, the stone walls of the original portion are still in good condition. The rear frame portion is in need of repair; the roof leaks and the interiors are neglected.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Rectangular, two-and-a-half stories, 51'-3" across the five-bay front by 40'-4" deep, with a two-story stone wing to the rear, 15' wide by 39' long. Other wood-frame additions have been made to the rear.
2. Foundations: When the house was moved, it was reset on a foundation wall of ledge stone rubble masonry. These walls probably extend down to bedrock.

3. Wall construction, finish: Exterior walls (21" in thickness) are of fine quality hand-dressed ashlar limestone; courses vary in thickness from 4" to 7". Quoins are cut stone, 12" in height. On the rear, two-story wing the walls are ledge stone rubble.
4. Structural system, framing: Exterior walls and main partition walls are masonry, load-bearing. Minor partitions, floors and roof are framed in wood.
5. Porches: Across the front there is a two-story porch (10'x50') with paired, square (9"x9") wood posts. There is another small porch on the west side, and at the rear there is a third porch, a later addition. Porch floors are wood. Over windows, one on east side and one on west side, there are ornate canopies, metal-roofed.
6. Chimneys: On the flat deck there are four, decorative brick, symmetrically placed chimneys that rise about 6' above the roof; each chimney served two fireplaces. There is a similar chimney on the rear wing; it served a fireplace and also a wood-burning kitchen range.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance has double, wood-paneled doors with a fanlight above. The opening is trimmed with cut-stone voussoirs with Doric-type pilasters on either side.
 - b. Windows: On the west elevation, first floor, there is a large one-story bay window. Typical windows on the first floor have double-hung sash (3'-6"x10'-0") extending down to the floor. Window heads are segmental arches of cut stone. For the windows on the front porch there are louver-type shutters. All windows on the rear wing, first and second floor, are segmental arched. On the second floor, main portion, the windows extend to the floor on the front porch. Openings are round arched with cut-stone voussoirs and a prominent keystone.
8. Roof:
 1. Shape, covering: The main block of the house has a mansard-type roof with slope of 12 in 12. The main roof slopes are covered with galvanized metal shingles. The upper flat deck is built-up composition roofing. The roof over the rear wing is hipped with a slope of 3 in 12; this portion is roofed with raised-rib sheet metal.
 2. Cornice: The prominent, wide cornice is heavily bracketed.
 3. Dormers: On the front and rear there are three dormers, and on the east and west sides two dormers. All the

dormers have hipped roofs, and the sides as well as the roofs of the dormers are covered with galvanized metal shingles.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: A typical formal plan with a central stairhall flanked on either side with two large square rooms. The wing to the rear was used for kitchen and servants' quarters.
- b. Second floor: Bedrooms quite similar to the first floor plan.
- c. Third (attic) floor: Similar in plan to lower floors except that rooms are smaller, lighted with dormer windows.

2. Stairways: The central stairway is a single-run, wood stairway that extends from first to attic floor. The risers and treads are completed. In the frame addition to the rear there is another single-run, wood stair.
3. Flooring: The floors throughout are tongue and groove pine; most rooms are carpeted.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster on wood lath.
5. Doorways and doors: Jambs of the thick walls of the stairhall are paneled. Doors are wood, four-panel type. Between the pairs of rooms on the first floor there are wide openings with sliding doors.
6. Lighting: Ceiling hung fixtures are of recent design, electrical. These probably replaced earlier gas fixtures.
7. Heating: In each of the four main rooms, first and also second floor, there is a fireplace. Some of the wood mantels have been removed. The house is now heated with gas-fired floor furnaces.

D. Site:

1. General Setting: The house was originally located on a relatively smooth site fronting on Guadalupe Street. The present site was leveled in the area of the house, but it rises steeply from the sidewalk level of Twelfth Street. Along this sidewalk there is a concrete retaining wall, 4' to 7' in height, and above the wall there is a steep slope up to the grade of the house. Originally the lot was attractively landscaped, but the lawn and plantings have been neglected recently.

2. Outbuildings, enclosures: Along the west property line there was a picket fence of wrought iron; only fragments remain at the rear of the lot. Facing on the alley there is a two-car garage of stone wall construction.

Prepared by:
Melvin M. Rotsch, Architect
Texas A & M University
Project Supervisor
National Park Service
August 1973

III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was jointly sponsored by the National Park Service and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Recorded under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed during the summer of 1973 at the HABS field office at the University of Texas, Austin. Project supervisor was Melvin M. Rotsch (architect, Texas A & M University); project historian was Ellen Beasley; student architects were J. Tucker Bishop (University of Texas), Stephen J. Farneth (Carnegie-Mellon University), Robert D. Ferland (Cornell University), Carl J. Frenning (University of Pennsylvania), Richard W. Schreiber (Boston Architectural Center), and David J. Yturralde (University of Texas). Photographs were taken in 1974 by Roy Pledger.